DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 013 PS 024 591

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TITLE Improving Students' Readiness To Learn.
PUB DATE May 96
NOTE 51p.; Master's Research Paper, Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Language Proficiency; *Learning Readiness; *Parent Participation; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Problem Solving; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Habits; *Reading Materials; *Reading Motivation; Socioeconomic Status
IDENTIFIERS Print Awareness

ABSTRACT

This Master's research project involved implementation of a program to increase learning readiness skills of children entering kindergarten. The target population was pre-kindergarten students in a changing urban community in northern Illinois. The problem of lack of readiness skills for learning was documented through teacher tests and observations of student behavior. Analysis of site-based probable cause data revealed that student skill deficits may be related to socioeconomic status, language deficits, and limited problem-solving strategies. Additional analysis of professional literature revealed that lack of parental involvement in the child's education may contribute to the problem. A review of solution strategies suggested by researchers, combined with analysis of site-based problems, resulted in the choice of interventions in the form of a parent involvement program and the establishment of a print-rich environment. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in parent in-school attendance, an increase in the number of books parents provided, and an increase in the amount of quiet time parents spent reading or working with their child. (Appendices present data collection instruments and samples of program materials. Contains 21 references.) (Author/EV)

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IMPROVING STUDENTS' READINESS TO LEARN

by

*Marline Bridges

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

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Introduction to Research
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Preliminary Abstract

Author: Marline Bridges **Site:** Rockford V

Date: May 13, 1996

Title: Increasing Learning Readiness Skills of Pre-Kindergarten Students

This report describes a program for increasing the learning readiness skills of children entering kindergarten. The targeted population consisted of pre-kindergarten students in a changing urban community located in northern Illinois. The problem of the lack of readiness skills for learning had been documented through teacher tests and observations of student behavior.

Analysis of site-based probable cause data revealed that student skill deficits may be related to socioeconomic status, language deficits, and limited problem solving strategies. Additional analysis of professional literature revealed that lack of parental involvement in the child's education may contribute to the problem.

A review of solution strategies suggested by researchers, combined with analysis of site-based problems, resulted in the following interventions being selected: a parent involvement program and the establishment of a print-rich environment.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in parent in-school attendance, an increase in the number of books parents provided and an increase in the amount of quiet time parents spent reading or working with their child.

Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students at the targeted elementary school lack learning readiness as evidenced by teacher observation, parent survey, and teacher interviews.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted elementary school was built in 1961 as a junior high school. In the late 1980's it became an alternative high school and day care center. In 1989 the program expanded to include six early childhood classrooms. In June of 1982, the alternative high school and day care moved. The targeted school building became a magnet school.

There are a total of 642 students currently enrolled in the magnet school, in preschool through sixth grade classes. The school is located in a unit district community that includes 42 elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools and one special education building. The population for the school is 44.7 percent White, 50.8 percent African-

American, 3.25 percent Asian. The school has an attendance rate of 95 percent. The average class size is 22.

The educational team consists of one principal, one assistant principal, and 44 classroom teachers. Support staff includes one music teacher, two speech and language clinicians, two science teachers, two computer lab teachers, two learning disability resource teachers, one social worker, and one nurse. The racial/ethnic background of the staff is 93 percent White, 4.6 percent African-American, 1.33 percent Mexican-American, .08 percent Asian, and .033 percent Native American. Average years of teaching experience is 17.1. Thirty-five percent of the staff has a bachelor's degree; 64.6 percent has a masters degree.

The school is located in a residential area. Some of the students are from the neighboring area, with the remainder bused from the community at large. The school offers a curriculum that is based on the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP). Average time devoted to the core subjects each week is as follows: language arts - five hours; math - three hours; science - three hours; social science - three and one-half hours. The average annual expenditure per student is $5,558 (School Report Card, 1994).

Housed in the same building are six early childhood education classrooms. The early childhood program is referred to as Project S.E.E.K. (Success in Early Education before Kindergarten). S.E.E.K. offers comprehensive programming for three and four year old children and their

families, and it is one component of the Early Childhood Program whose mission is "to be responsive to the needs of children and their family/support system." The High/Scope Curriculum is implemented through programming options, which include center-based and home-based programming.

Children attend center-based A.M. and P.M. classes four days a week. The class time is two and one half hours per day. The A.M. classes generally consist of 15 children three years of age and the P.M. classes consist of 18 children four years of age. During school time, nutritional needs of the preschool children are met through providing a cold breakfast in the morning session and a hot lunch in the afternoon session. Another important aspect of the program is the availability of the toy, game and book lending library. This is one of the support mechanisms in the implementation of preschool programming.

Home-based programming is comprised of one visit per family per week. Children receiving home-based programming join a center-based class once each month to engage in a class experience. Home -based teachers serve eleven families three days of each week. One day each week is devoted to screening and identification of children at risk.

Family programming options include parent-child activities, home visits, classroom participation, parent informational meetings, and support group meetings. Families may obtain clothing, books, and toys from the S.E.E.K. Boutique. "Dads' Days" and other special family events complete

S.E.E.K.'s comprehensive family programming.

The Surrounding Community

The city is the second largest community in the state. The residents have a quick and easy access to larger metropolitan areas. In the northeast and southeast quadrants of the city, many new subdivisions have recently been built. A number of residents have moved to the city because of its lower housing costs, and they commute daily to a larger urban area. Historically, the city has been a manufacturing community and at one time was the major producer of screws, small machinery, and furniture. The first large influx of immigrants was from Sweden, and it was this group who founded most of the early manufacturing businesses. Most of the early manufacturing sites were located either in the southeast or the southwest quadrants of the city near the city's major river. The river not only divided the city into east and west, but it also was a divider along socioeconomic and ethnic lines. The east side of the city was, and is, the more affluent area and has a majority of White population. Early in its industrialization, the west side first had a large Italian population, later a Polish population, and today a majority of Mexican-Americans and African-Americans reside in this area of the city.

In May of 1989, the west side residents filed a lawsuit against the school district for a long-standing discrimination against minority students.

Prior to the lawsuit, the district did make some attempts to integrate the student population by offering special programs such as the gifted program and the performing arts program at the west side schools. The closing of a west side high school, leaving the west side with only one high school and the east side with three high schools, was seen as another example of discrimination against minority students. In 1994, the district was found guilty of discrimination, and was put under the supervision of a desegregation master whose role is to see that the court orders and guidelines are being followed. Extra money has been designated to 14 schools that have been targeted as at-risk schools, with mostly low-income and minority population. These schools are labeled as community academies or C-8 schools. The majority of these schools are located in the southwest quadrant of the city, a low-income area. The goal of the district is to raise the test scores of the C-8 student population and to further integrate the student population. The lawsuit and the higher taxes on property have created a division in the community. A number of parents see the lawsuit as one that will not raise test scores of minority students, but rather as one that will lower the test scores of the majority of the students.

The city has a population of 139,426 people. According to the 1990 census, the population consists of 77.9 percent White, 14.4 percent African-American, four percent Mexican-American, one and a half percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and two-tenths percent Native American. The

median household income is $28,282, and the median value of a single-family home is $56,300. The median monthly rent is $296. In July of 1994, the city's newspaper listed an average price of a home listed in the neighborhood of the school as $180,000.

The city has 42 elementary schools, four middle schools, and four public high schools. There is an increasing number of private schools K-12. The city has a two-year community college and a private four-year college. Forty one thousand, one hundred ninety five students over three years of age are enrolled in pre-kindergarten, elementary, high school, or college. Pre-kindergarten enrollment is 3,137; 26,195 are enrolled in public schools; 3,323 attend private schools; and 8,006 attend colleges or universities.

Data on educational attainment level in the city indicates that 74.8 percent are high school graduates or higher. The percentage of the population having a ninth grade or lower level of education is eight and nine tenths percent (Council of 100, 1995). The public school district's median expenditure per pupil is $5,500.

Regional and National Context of Problem

The problem of learning readiness has caused concern on all levels: local, state and national. President Bush, in his 1990 State of the Union message to Congress and the American people, outlined six goals for the nation's schools. At the top of the list was his declaration that by the year

2000, every American child will start school "ready to learn." The President's educational goals were endorsed by all 50 state governors (Boyer, 1992).

In 1997, the federal government is planning to launch a "Head Start" type program for children from birth to age three. This action was the result of two independent studies conducted by the University of Miami and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The studies found that one-fourth of all American children lack learning readiness and are at-risk for school failure. (Miller, 1995).

The depth of the crisis has divided educational researchers. Not only are schools and programs under an attack, but so are theories concerning the very nature of "readiness" - when it occurs, how it develops in children, at what age levels, and when intervention is most effective. The developmentalists' theory that intelligence and readiness for learning develops at successive developmental stages is attacked because of its disregard that children make greater advancement in some areas and experience delays in others. The notion that "intellectual breakthroughs" occur at certain ages disregards the possibility that some "intellectual breakthroughs" are innate. Research has not yet established an easy formula for distinguishing beforehand the "intellectual skills" that are brought to

school and those that are the result of schooling (Sameroff and McDonough, 1994).

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

In order to document the degree of the lack of early learning readiness skills, a parent survey and student checklist was initiated during the first two weeks of school. Further documentation included teacher observation.

All of the 13 children in the afternoon preschool class and their parents were involved in the data collection process. The students were between four years and six months, and four years and eleven months in age. Sixty percent of the students had never been involved in any previous school setting.

The student checklist was developed by the researcher (See Appendix A) to aid in documenting the problem. The checklist was designed to determine if children had been introduced to a world of learning through books before coming to school. A summary of the checklist results are presented in table 1.

Table

Results of Student Checklist Response
September 5, 1995 through September 11, 1995

Interest Areas	%Yes	%No
Like being read to	77	23
Like picture books	70	30
Bookshelf at home	15	85
Read to parents	30	70
Tell a story	46	54
Receive books as gifts:		
For birthday	30	70
For Christmas	23	77

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The children's responses indicate that approximately 77 percent of the children liked being read to and 70 percent of the children liked picture books. This information from the children reveals that children, at an early age, do like books. However, the lack of book shelves, as indicated by 85 percent of students, and the fact that only 30 percent are read to by parents, would indicate the lack of parents meeting their obligations. It would seem that it is the parents' responsibility to provide these items.

The numbers also indicate that only 30 percent of children receive books as birthday gifts and only 23 percent receive books for Christmas. These numbers would indicate children do not learn to enjoy a variety of reading materials at home.

To further explore the problem, a parent survey was developed by the researcher (See Appendix B). The parent survey measured parents' feelings about the importance of preschool early learning. Table 2 shows the result of the parent survey.

The parent survey was completed during the time the researcher was making home visits to complete enrollment applications. This allowed the researcher to observe parents informally with their children. The informal observation showed that parents have many daily responsibilities that would leave little time for pleasure reading with their children. This could account for the fact that there is such a low percent of parents that read to their children daily.

Table 1

Parent Survey
August 28 to September 7, 1995
Percentage of Parents Responding

Question	Number of responses	Percentage
Read to your child		
a. Daily	3	23
b. 2-4 times weekly	10	77
c. More than once weekly	0	0
Number of children's books		
a. Less than 10	5	38
b. 10 to 20	3	24
c. More than 21	5	38
Room child is read to		
a. Bedroom	1	8
b. Living room	5	38
c. Other	7	54
Number of children read to		
a. One	4	30
b. Two or three	6	47
c. Four or more	3	23
Enjoy reading		
a. Magazines	5	38
b. Newspaper	3	24
c. Good book	5	38
Child checks out books		
a. School library	6	47
b. Classroom	4	30
c. Public library	3	23

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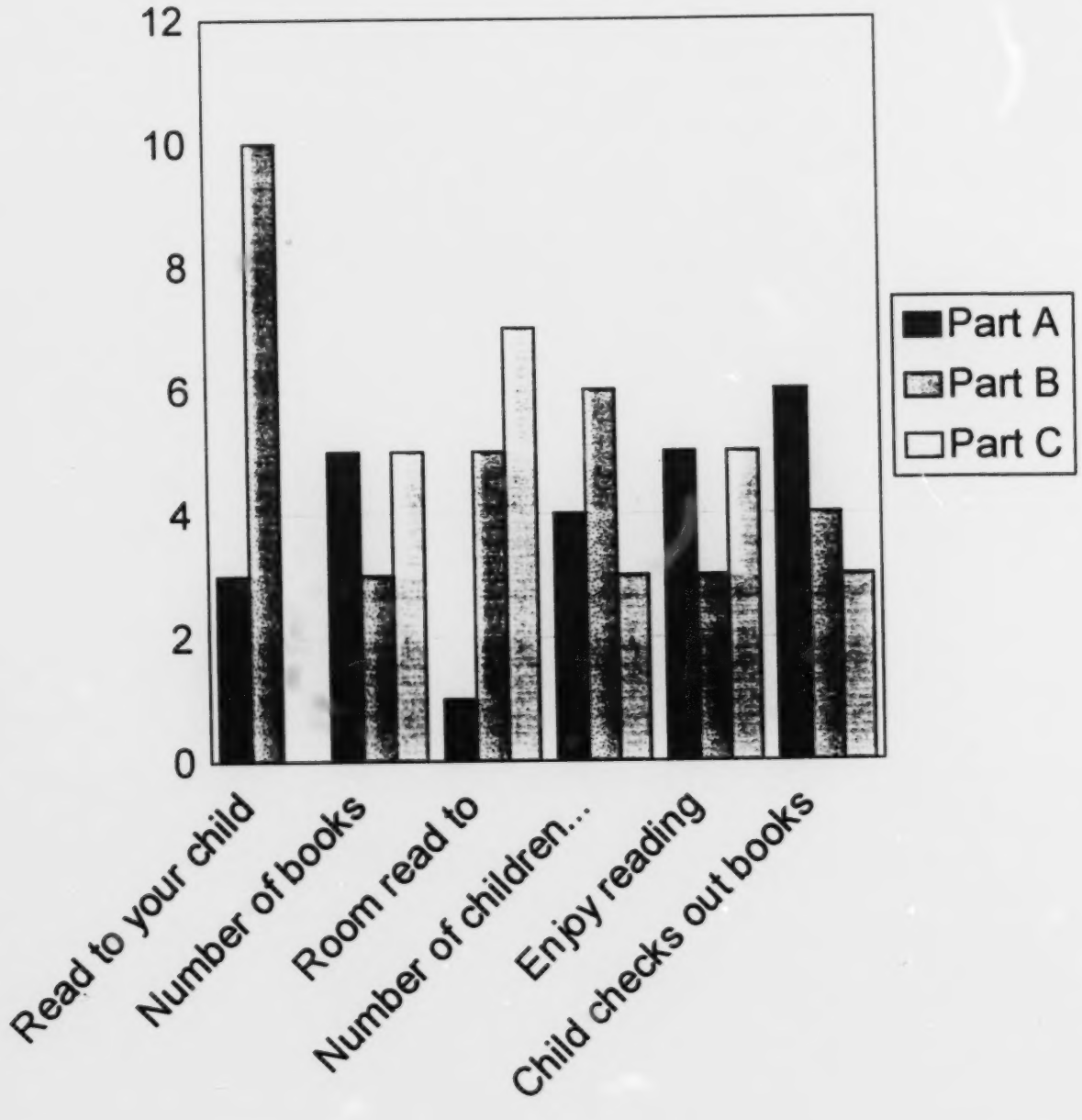
Figure 1

Parent Survey
August 28 to September 7, 1995
Number of Parents Responding



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The low number of children's books in the home may not allow children to have a variety of experiences that come from books. In the home, the parents do not spend one-on-one time with their children as indicated by the variety of places where children are read to and the number of children that are read to at one time. Parents are more dependent on school libraries than any other source.

The researcher found that all parents do like to read. The choice of reading materials did not have a great impact on the findings in this survey. The fact that parents do read is a good role model for their children; however, the lack of availability of books in the home does not give the children opportunity to learn, and it may interfere with motivation to learn.

The teacher observation checklist provided a third assessment of early learning readiness skills. According to the observation results, 61 percent of the children cried the first week of school; 46 percent listened to a story for five minutes; and 23 percent chose the library area at free choice time (See Appendix C).

The number of children that cried would indicate that children are not ready to leave home at such an early age. Children have not had enough experiences listening to stories or having quiet time at home. This accounts for the fact that they are unable to listen to a story for more than five minutes.

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
September 11, 1995 through September 14, 1995

Cried first week of school	61%
Listened to story for five minutes	46%
Chose library for free choice time	23%

Probable Causes

When we talk about learning readiness, perhaps the best place to start is with prenatal care. In America today, one fourth of pregnant women receive belated prenatal care or none at all. One child out of every four children under six years of age is born into poverty and 12 million children are hungry at some time each month. More than 40,000 babies are born with birth defects and 10 percent are addicts (Boyer, 1993).

By traditional standards, the task seemed simple. Armed with approved mandates and dollars, cities and states set off to implement high quality early childhood programs (Kagan 1989B). With the increase of teenage pregnancy and the increasing numbers of women in the work force, it seemed to be the right time for early childhood education. However somewhere in the rush, provisions for trained staff dropped by the wayside. Colleges and universities are not developing well trained teachers and administrators. An alarming trend taking place in early childhood today is

the tendency of young parents to provide too much too soon for their young children.

According to Kagan (1990), learning readiness and school readiness have competed for attention. Leading theorists agree that learning readiness is the level of development at which an individual has the capacity to undertake the learning of specific materials. Despite the agreement on the definition, theorists disagree on which forces affect learning readiness. Piaget focuses on internal forces; Bruner focuses on environmental forces; and Robert Gagne suggests that there are three factors: attention sets, motivation, and developmental status affect learning readiness. This variety of opinions suggest that multiple forces affect learning readiness (Kagan, 1990).

Kagan (1990) also states that readiness for school has been associated with children's writing, drawing, self-concept, fine and gross motor skills, perceptual skills, and social and emotional skills. Family socioeconomic status, family size, and absent fathers affect learning readiness skills.

In the low income families, children are taking on adult responsibilities much too soon. In the more affluent communities, children are off to swimming classes and gymnastics classes before they have mastered the skill of running, skipping, and jumping (Hillman 1989). Children are not allowed to grow and develop before they are pushed into developmentally inappropriate activities.

No other factor in life will have more of an impact on a child than family background. However, the number of people in deep urban poverty has tripled since 1970. The rate of teen pregnancy has almost doubled (Lewis 1994). Many of the fathers of the children born to teens are either in prison or have no interest in the child.

According to Bowman (1994), most poor and minority children are at risk for developmental failure but the conflict between behaviors valued at home and in the community, and those valued by schools, underlies many school difficulties. Many times in urban communities, the role model for young children exhibits negative behavior. In many cases such role models are undesirable.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of Literature

Analysis of problem evidence suggested that prekindergarten students lacked learning readiness skills. The term, learning readiness, applies to young children rather than to individuals of all ages (Kagan 1992).

Since the onset of Head Start, researchers have been addressing the issues associated with early care and intervention in public schools (Kagan 1989A). In the beginning, early intervention was a "quick fix" solution for low income children and their families. Today's early intervention programs no longer concern only low income families, but families of all socioeconomic levels.

Early intervention is not only the concern of researchers, but businessmen, religious leaders, and politicians are joining forces for early intervention. President Bush, in his 1992 address to the Nation's Governors declares, "By the year 2000, all children in America will start to school ready to learn." (Willer & Bredekamp 1990.) Efforts to achieve such a

profound goal must begin with the realization that all children are born learners.

The literature search for solution strategies indicates that basic learning readiness skills have five essential factors. These factors are: physical well being, motor development, social and emotional development, developmental stages of learning, language usage, and general background knowledge (Kagan 1992).

Background knowledge is an important factor in developing learning readiness skills. Background knowledge is what children use to make sense of what they see, hear and experience. If background knowledge is limited, new material will not be easily understood (Trelease 1993).

Children's health has a profound impact on their development and readiness to learn. Comprehensive health service must be a part of a national focus, if every child will enter school ready to learn. In addition to providing health services, children must have the proper nutrition if growth and development is to take place.

In addition to providing quality health services, this nation must provide schools that are ready for children. Practices in early childhood programs are frequently inconsistent with what we know about children's development (Katz 1988). In some instances, the first grade curriculum is pushed down to kindergarten and the kindergarten curriculum is pushed down to preschool.

The classroom is a child's home away from home. The single most important job for the teacher of young children is to create a homelike environment so that children feel comfortable to explore, to test themselves, and to work out their problems (Hillman 1989).

The preschool experience can be enormously beneficial, especially to children at risk. We need quality preschools that will help children overcome poor nutrition, under-developed linguistic skills, and social deprivation (Boyer 1993). The ideal school for young children is one where children's needs, interests, and concerns are important (Bowman 1994).

The aim is to produce thinkers that are critical and creative. The way to achieve this aim is to create an environment that is a developmentally appropriate learning environment that challenges the child's emerging mental ability (Elkind 1989). We need students that are active and who learn early to find out for themselves.

Beyond a healthy start and quality preschools, we also need parent involvement. Parents are the first and most important teachers of young children. Strong parent participation and frequent communication between parents, teachers, and students provides a strong commitment to education.

In this country, a family resource and support movement is growing. We must recognize the link between parent and child readiness (Kagan 1990). Parents want to be involved in their child's education. The schools must receive parents with a positive attitude (Wirth 1991). All parents can,

in some way, become involved. Homework, parent-child take home projects, storytelling, organizing art fairs, are just a few ways of involving parents.

Project Outcome and Solution Component

> As a result of a program to increase parental involvement during the period of September 1995 to January 1996, the target pre-k class will increase readiness skills as measured by teacher observation, student checklist, and parent survey.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Establish planned days for parents to come to school for story time activities.
2. Develop in-school parent-student projects to help increase readiness skills.
3. Develop take home activity bags that will allow parents to work with their children at home.

Action Plan for the Intervention

The research suggests that an increase in parent involvement in early education will increase learning readiness skills. The development of take home activity bags was chosen to encourage parents to spend a few minutes, on a regular basis, completing a fun, as well as, a learning activity with their child. Each activity was designed to be a learning experience that was

developmentally appropriate.

Bags of heavy denim with a drawstring at the top were made. There was one bag for each child and the activity in each bag was skill related. Each bag was labeled with the skill it contained; for example: sorting, sequencing, cutting, etc.

The intervention began during the second week of school. Each child took home an activity bag on the second and fourth week of each month. The children took the bags home on Monday and returned them to school on Wednesday of the same week. On Wednesday and Thursday, during whole group time, the children told about the activity they completed with their parents at home.

A checklist was used to pass out and collect activity bags. The checklist also ensured that children took home different activity bags. (See Appendix D).

The initial cost of the bags was provided by the district. Replacement cost, if necessary, was provided by parents. Parents were also responsible for making sure the bags were returned to school; however, if a bag was not returned, the child was still allowed to take home another activity bag. The importance of the activity bags was to teach a skill as well as involve parents in their child's learning experience.

In addition to take-home activity bags, parents were invited to visit the classroom to complete a project with their child. Three special days between

October and January were chosen. The special days included Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. (See Appendix E).

To organize special days, room mothers were asked to volunteer to help gather materials and contact parents. A note was sent home to ask parents' permission to allow room mothers to have access to their phone numbers. It was the responsibility of the room mothers to make sure there were enough materials provided so that each parent-child team completed a project. Grandparents were invited in the event that a parent was working or had other commitments.

Methods of Assessment

The effects of this intervention will be determined by teacher observation, student checklist, and parent survey.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase readiness skills at the pre-kindergarten level. The implementation of in-school activities and take home activity bags were selected to increase parental involvement.

Story time activities were used to introduce parents and children to the joy and fun of reading. Parents were invited to come to school on specific days to read stories. Activities related to the contents of the book were developed so that the parents and children could recall information immediately. (See Appendix F).

Take home activity bags provided a regular scheduled activity for parents to work on at home with their children. The activity bags were sent home each week. Activities were carefully chosen for the appropriate developmental level of the children.

The original plan called for three in-school fun days with parents.

The first in-school fun activity was the Halloween Party and parade. The next fun day was a Harvest Fest. Finally, we had our family party at Christmas time.

Two in-school readings were planned. The first was a reading of "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" and the second was a reading of "Is It Dark, Is It Light?" The books were read and games were planned around the contents of the books. However, plans changed because of test schedules and only one book was read. Lesson plans for these activities are included. (See Appendix G).

A parent group was organized to help with the preparation of special days, activity bags, and in-school reading projects. One parent agreed to be in charge of the parent group. The teacher/researcher contacted parents by phone and four more parents agreed to help make the activity bags, but only if they could work on the project at home. As the parent group evolved, two more parents joined for a total of seven parents participating. (See Appendix H).

Prior to the beginning of the intervention, the teacher/researcher made a tentative schedule of dates the activity bags would go home, when special

activities would take place, and dates of special fun days. Materials for the activity bags were gathered and the bags were completely made.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the intervention strategies, a student checklist was again administered. The checklist was the same checklist that was given at the beginning of the intervention period. When comparisons were made, the teacher/researcher discovered that there were noticeable improvements in all areas when compared to Table 1 in Chapter 3. The number of children who liked being read to increased from 77 percent to 85 percent. Picture book reading increased from 70 percent to 77 percent. The increase in the number of students who had book shelves at home increased dramatically. Book shelves in the home is a parent's responsibility; therefore, the numbers would indicate that parents are also becoming more involved in their child's education.

The number of children who read to their parents and told a story increased by 50 percent. The increase clearly indicates that children are being read to and enjoying it more. Children who received books as gifts also increased by 50 percent. The intervention appears to have had a

Table I

Results of Student Checklist Response
January 8, 1996 through January 12, 1996

Interest Areas	%Yes	%No
Like being read to	85	15
Like picture books	77	23
Bookshelf at home	46	54
Read to parents	61	39
Tell a story	92	8
Receive books as gifts:		
For birthday	61	39
For Christmas	46	54

positive effect on all children surveyed.

The results of the parent survey show a dramatic increase in all areas over the survey that was given at the beginning of the intervention period. The exception was parents who read to their children. This decreased from 77 percent to 69 percent. This decrease can be attributed to the fact that parents used the activity bags at home. While parents read to their children less, there was an increase in the purchase of books.

Parents are now reading to their children more in the bedroom. This would indicate that parents are choosing a quiet place to read to their children. The number of children being read to at one time increased.

The survey also clearly shows that parents enjoy reading a good book as compared to reading the newspaper or magazine. Children are now checking out books from the school library and public library, as well. The overall increase indicates that parents are reading more themselves to their children as shown in Table 2.

At the of the intervention, the teacher/researcher wanted more information from parents to get an insight on how parents felt about the project. Table 3 shows that parents read more to their children. Parents also

Table 1

Parent Survey
Since the Survey Began

Question	Number of responses	Percentage
Do you read to your child?		
a. more	6	46
b. less	0	0
c. about the same	7	54
How many children's books have you purchased?		
a. none	0	0
b. less than three	7	54
c. more than three	6	46
What do you think about the activity bags?		
a. helpful	6	46
b. good	7	54
c. very good help at home	0	0

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Figure 1

Parent Survey
January 8 through 12. 1996

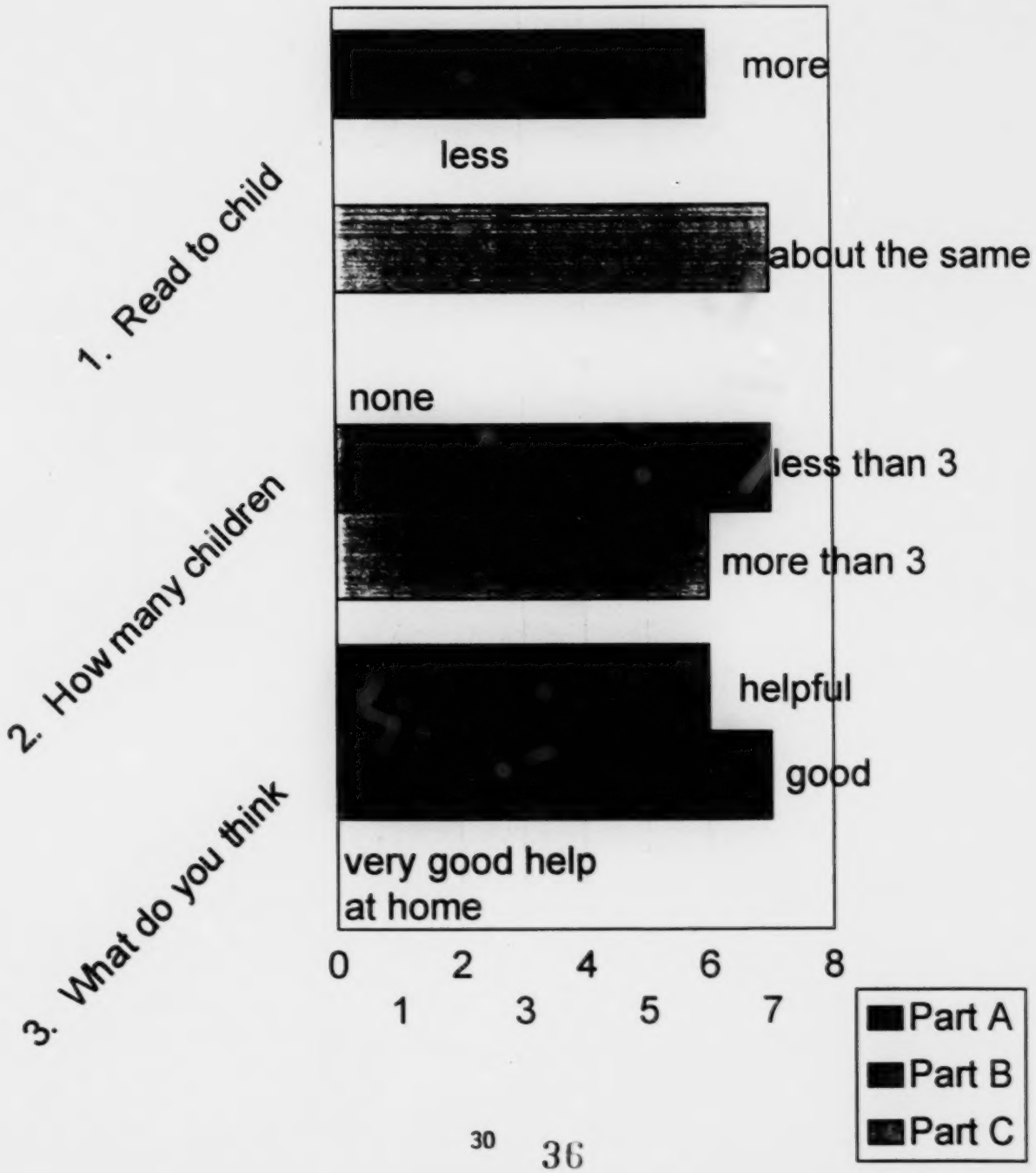

Table 2

Parent Survey/January 8 through January 12, 1996
% of Parents Responding

Question	*No. of Responses & Percentage*			
	Sept.	*Sept. %*	*Jan.*	*Jan. %*
Read to your child				
a. Daily	3	23%	4	31%
b. 2-4 times weekly	10	27%	9	69%
c. More than once weekly	0	0%	0	0%
Number of children's books				
a. Less than 10	5	38%	0	0%
b. 10-20	3	24%	0	0%
c. More than 21	5	38%	13	100%
Room child is read to				
a. Bedroom	1	8%	4	31%
b. Living room	5	38%	3	23%
c. Other	7	54%	8	46%
Number of children read to				
a. One	4	30%	3	23%
b. Two or three	6	47%	10	77%
c. Four or more	5	38%	6	46%
d. No response			2	15%
Child checks out books from:				
a. School library	6	47%	4	31%
b. Classroom library	4	30%	2	15%
c. Public library	3	23%	12	54%

purchased more books during the intervention. The teacher/researcher also wanted to know how parents felt about the activities. Table 3 shows that all parents felt that the activities were good or helpful.

As the intervention progressed, parents in-school attendance increased from 46 percent to 62 percent at the end of the intervention period. A summary of parent attendance is listed in Table 4. The information clearly indicates that the research project increased parent involvement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, early learning skills and parent involvement were improved. The parents participated in school and at home. The children improved in their desire to read books, listen to stories and complete activities. The planned activities allowed parents and students to work and play together. This contributed to the success of the research project.

The implementation of this research project took approximately four and one half months. The length of time was sufficient to gather data and to draw conclusions. If a teacher would like more information, I would suggest repeating the process at a later time.

Table 4

Parents In-School Attendance

Activity	Number of Parents	Percentage
Story Time	5	46
Children's Party & Parade	7	54
Story Time	7	54
Harvest Festival	9	69
Family Party	8	62

I would recommend the use of zip lock bags as the take home activity bags. The plastic bags may be changed after each use. The activities chosen for the intervention gave information about parents and children. It increased parent involvement while increasing early learning skills.

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STUDENT CHECKLIST

		Yes	No
1.	Do you like to have someone read to you?	____	____
2.	Do you like to look at picture books?	____	____
3.	Do you have a book shelf at home?	____	____
4.	Do you read to your parents?	____	____
5.	Can you tell me a story that someone read to you?	____	____
6.	Did you ever get a book for your birthday?	____	____
7.	Did you ever get a book for Christmas?	____	____

PARENT SURVEY

1. How often do you read to your child?

   ____ daily ____ 2-4 times a week ____ more than 4 times a week

2. How many child's books does your child have?

   ____ less than 10 books

   ____ 10-20 books

   ____ more than 21 books

3. Where in the house do you read to your child?

   ____ child's bedroom

   ____ living room

   ____ in different places

4. How many children do you read to at one time?

   ____ one ____ 2-3 ____ 4 or more

5. What do you like to read best?

   ____ magazines ____ newspaper ____ book

6. Does your child check out books from:

   ____ school library ____ classroom ____ public library

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____ **Class:** _____ **Date:** _____

Target skills: _____

Ratings:
+ = Frequently
✓= Sometimes
o = Not yet

Names of Students			*Comments*
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			

ACTIVITY BAGS

STUDENTS									

HALLOWEEN PARTY & PARADE

The Halloween Party and Parade was very exciting. None of the children wanted to eat lunch. They wanted to get in to their costumes right away. School rules state that lunch must be served, so we went through the motions. Lots of food was wasted.

Out of a class of sixteen students, thirteen parents came. Only nine parents consented to be part of the research project.

Before school, the teacher took candy to the three offices and four kindergarten classes. The teacher and assistant prepared copies of songs we would sing with the parents and students.

We dressed in our costumes, went on the parade, came back to the room for games and singing. The teacher was glad to see parents being so helpful. They joined in singing, played games, and helped serve the food. Parents stayed behind to clean the room.

Only two children needed to go home on the bus. Each parent took their child home.

FALL FESTIVAL

As the parents arrived, the children were allowed to introduce their parent. Parents were invited to sit on the circle with their child. This time there were two fathers. Since the children had prepared all the food beforehand, the parents had very little to do.

It was quite a learning experience. The food served was what we had been discussing in our class. We had visited a corn field and also talked about squirrels gathering nuts. Our menu consisted of baked cornbread and butter, baked sweet potatoes, peanuts, grapes, corn on the cob, watermelon, cantaloupe, and apples. The room was decorated with leaves and pictures of apples.

Nine parents that are part of the project attended; eleven came altogether. Parents helped clean the room after the festival.

FAMILY PARTY

Today, we began working on our "Family Party." The children are making their hand print to present as a gift to their parents at the Family Party. We will use modeling clay to make the hand prints and allow them to dry for a few days. When the mold is dry enough, we will spray it with a bronze paint.

The children will make the wrapping paper using butcher block paper and red and green paint. They simply cover their hands with paint and make an impression on the butcher block paper. Some of the paper will be used as table cloths.

IN-SCHOOL STORY TIME

Book: "Brown Bear, Brown Bear"

Read the book several times to the children. After reading the book a few times, the children will begin to read along with you.

Duplicate the animals exactly as they appear in the book. Make five or six copies of each animal.

As parents are arriving, invite them to join you and the children on the reading rug or whatever you are doing with the children. Allow a few minutes for late parents to arrive. Singing is a very good activity to get all the children to come to the quiet reading rug right away. Invite the children to introduce their parent to the group.

IN-SCHOOL STORY TIME

Book: "Is it Dark? Is it Light?"

Read the book several times to the children a day or two before the parents are scheduled to come. After the children are families with the book, they will begin to read with you.

Duplicate the activities as they appear in the book. Be sure to prepare enough materials so that each child has more than one chance to respond. The activities are opposites. For example: up-down, big-little.

As parents are arriving, invite them to join in whatever you are doing with the children. Allow a few mintues for late parents to arrive. Singing is a very good activity to get all the children to come to the quiet rug right away. Invite the children to introduce their parents to the group.

Dear Parents,

Again, thanks for your help in making the parent-child take-home activity bags. Ms. has agreed to make contact with you to let you know when you need to come to school or do work at home.

I need permission to give Ms. your phone number. Your phone number will only be used as it relates to the take-home activities.

Sincerely,

☐ I give my permission for Ms. to have my phone number

☐ I do not wish my number given to anyone.

_____

Signature